CHAPTER 7

Public Education and External Relations

Community Relations

7.1 My Office mounts a diversified multi-media drive information and education :

- to reach out to our community;
- to publicise our services;
- to promote a positive complaint culture among Hong Kong people; and
- to foster a culture of service among public officers.

Publicity

7.2 From experience, the most effective means of publicity is the media. We have produced an "Announcement of Public Interest" (API) for broadcast on our local TV and radio channels to advise the public on what, where and how to lodge complaints to The Ombudsman.

Fig.7.1 Advertising in Mass Transit Railway carriages.

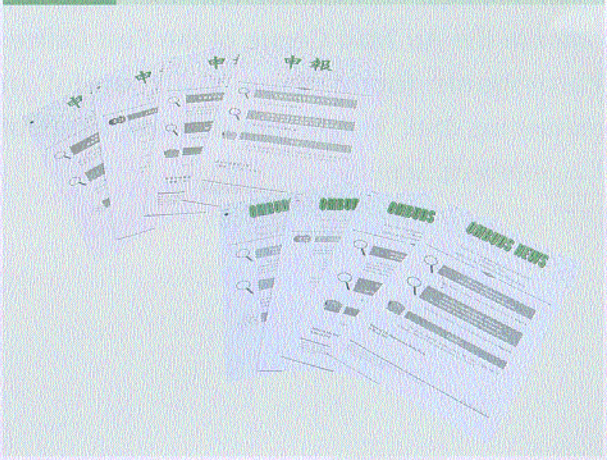
7.3 Other publicity efforts include roving exhibitions, advertising on RoadShow on buses and information panels in Mass Transit Railway carriages. These programmes help to maintain community awareness of our services.

Fig.7.2 Roadside banners to publicise roving exhibitions

7.4 I attend interviews with media reporters on an *ad hoc* basis. The aim is to maintain public awareness of our institution and our services.

7.5 "Ombuds News", our periodical newsletter, announces selected anonymised investigation reports as well as our new initiatives and recent developments. It is released on a regular basis at our press conferences and usually attracts good coverage.

Fig.7.3 Ombuds News



Visit to Legislative Council

7.6 We continued our liaison with major public and community organisations. My directorate and I met with Members of the Legislative Council in December 2001 to update them on our developments and initiatives.

Meeting with Chairmen of District Councils

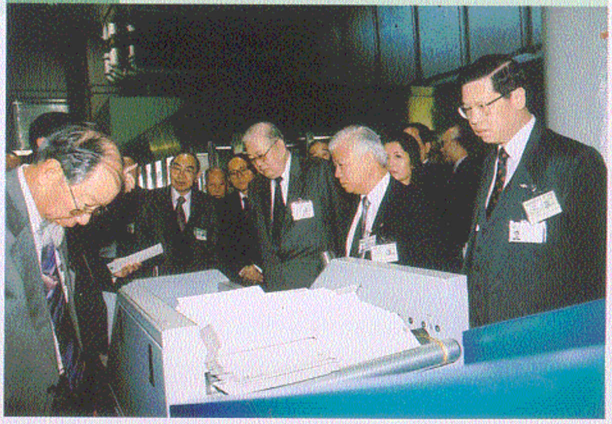
7.7 As a new initiative and with the assistance of the Director of Home Affairs, I met the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of District Councils in February 2002. The meeting enabled me to explain our functions to district leaders and to exchange views on issues of common concern.

Justices of the Peace Assistance Scheme

7.8 The Justices of the Peace (JPs) Assistance Scheme was launched in 1996 to promote understanding of the work of this Office. At present, 375 JPs have enrolled in the Scheme. Some have participated actively in visits and workshops organised by this Office. We appreciate their support and their suggestions on various aspects of our work.

7.9 During the reporting period, we arranged two orientation visits for the JPs -- one to the Vehicle Emission Testing Centres of the Environmental Protection Department and the other to the Air Mail Centre of the Post Office. Participants found these visits useful in enhancing their insight into different facets of Government activity.

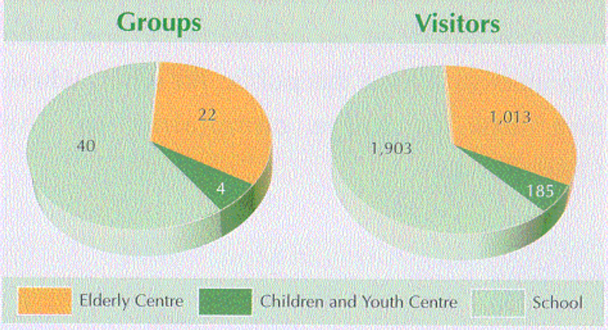
Fig.7.4 JPs visiting the Air Mail Centre of the Post Office



Resource Centre

7.10 We welcome individuals and community groups to visit our Resource Centre, which houses a rich collection of Ombudsman-related literature. A group visit normally comprises a tour to the Centre, followed by a forum for exchange of views with representatives of this Office. A total of 3,101 persons from 66 groups visited the Centre in the reporting year.

Fig.7.5 Visitors to Resource Centre



Information Videos

7.11 We have produced two short videos, to introduce the work of the Office and our telephone complaint service. Both offer useful visual aids for our visits to District Councils and community organisations.

Fig.7.6 VCD on telephone complaint service

The Ombudsman Awards

7.12 For organisations -- In recognition of the professional and positive approach to complaint management by public organisations, Ombudsman Awards have been introduced since July 1997. Organisations are adjudged on the basis of their handling of complaints referred to them by this Office and their commitment to improving the quality of their services, including implementation of The Ombudsman's recommendations. These annual awards are highly regarded as open acknowledgement of the organisations concerned as responsive and accountable. The two winners for 2001 were the Inland Revenue Department and the Immigration Department. The awards have been well received by public organisations and the general public.

Fig.7.7 **Ombudsman Awards 2001 leaflet**

7.13 For officers -- These annual awards are for individual public officers who display exemplary fairness, impartiality and efficiency in the performance of their duties over an extended period. 17 public officers from 11 organisations received awards during the reporting period.

Fig.7.8 **Outdoor video screen publishing Ombudsman Awards**

7.14 Nominations for the awards in 2002 are underway.

Complaint Management Workshops

7.15 To promote professionalism in managing complaints, my Office organised a Complaint Management Workshop in January 2002. Over 300 representatives from Government departments and public organisations attended and the feedback was encouraging. The open forums and free exchange also help this Office to reflect on our own *modus operandi* and review our working arrangements. Similar workshops will be organised on a regular basis.

Fig.7.9 **Complaint Management Workshop Programme**
24 January 2002
– Complaints : Gift or Nuisance?

Plenary sessions

- Providing Good Customer Service in CLP Power Hong Kong Limited
- A Complaint is a Gift
- Complaint Handling in Office of The Ombudsman

Concurrent workshops

- The Role of Mediation in Dispute Resolution
- Experience Sharing on Handling Complaint Cases referred by Office of The Ombudsman
- Case Study

Fig.7.10 **Participants at Complaint Management Workshop**

Induction and In-service Training

7.16 Complaint handling is now an integral part of the work of public officers, particularly for those in the front-line. Most public officers have to deal with complaints in the course of their career and may even become subjects of complaint themselves. To meet their operational needs, we conduct talks for departmental recruits and serving officers. During the reporting year, we made six addresses.

External Relations

7.17 This Office is a member of the International Ombudsman Institute and I am on the Board of Directors. In August 2001, I attended the 19th Australasian Pacific Ombudsman's Conference of the Institute, during which representatives from Ombudsman institutions in the Region shared their experience. In October 2001, I attended the Institute's Board of Directors' Meeting in Korea to formulate its long-term plans.

7.18 This Office is also a founding member of the Asian Ombudsman Association and I have been elected as Secretary to the Association. In June, I attended the 6th Association meeting in Japan during which I spoke on the "Reality and Ideals of the Asian Ombudsman" with reference, of course, to the Hong Kong system. In preparation for its 7th Conference, I attended a pre-meeting in March 2002 in Beijing. The full Conference will be held in May in Beijing.

7.19 We have an exchange programme with the China Supervision Institute and maintain close liaison with the Commission Against Corruption in the Macau Special Administrative Region.

7.20 We regularly receive visitors from Ombudsman institutions in overseas jurisdictions and representatives of the Ministry of Supervision of China. From time to time, groups of Mainland officials attend training courses in Hong Kong, which invariably include a half-day visit to this Office. Our directorate officers give talks to these visiting groups. During the reporting period, we received 11 overseas visitors, 54 representatives from the Ministry of Supervision and delivered talks to 13 groups comprising 354 members. We welcome such contacts and learn from the liaison too.

7.21 Through these exchanges, we keep abreast of the developments of Ombudsman institutions the world over.

Fig.7.11 **The Ombudsman at the 6th Conference of Asian Ombudsman Association**